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SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY - CAMEROON

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COUNTRY CONDITIONS  
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¶1. Cameroon, population 18 million, is a unitary republic dominated by a strong presidency and highly entrenched bureaucracy. The primary languages are French and English, with numerous dialects amongst its more than 200 tribal and ethnic groups. Embassy Yaounde also processes visa applications (immigrant and non-immigrant) for the Central African Republic, as well as immigrant visas for Chad and Equatorial Guinea.

¶2. Yaounde is a high fraud post. Fraud and corruption are pervasive throughout the country and at all levels of government, even extending to official requests for visas, and fraudulent information in genuine documents is common. With widespread poverty and frequent claims of political oppression and human rights abuses, there is great incentive for Cameroonian citizens to emigrate by any possible means.

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NIV FRAUD  
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¶3. Rampant document fraud has caused Post to disregard almost all documentation provided by an NIV applicant other than the visa application itself, and to base decisions purely on the visa interview. It is therefore rare for NIV fraud to be investigated unless Post hopes to uncover a larger trend. Post regularly sees instances where a gainfully employed applicant with strong family and economic ties to a home in Cameroon applied for a B1/B2 visa under false pretenses, only to claim asylum and then subsequently bring the family into the US through the inexpensive and relatively quick Visas 92 process.

¶4. NIV fraud among government officials and other influential individuals persists. A lack of control over diplomatic notes and official/service passports in Cameroon and surrounding countries has led to multiple attempts by non-officials or former officials to apply for A or G visas fraudulently. This applies doubly to applications from the Central African Republic, where Post has received on multiple occasions diplomatic visa requests including fake mission orders or diplomatic notes.

¶5. Post continues to see known, successful travelers re-apply alongside lesser qualified travelers in fairly transparent efforts to win a visa for someone who would not qualify on their own. Fake husband and wife applicants are most common, but local chiefs, "Fons", and other traditional rulers are increasingly encountered by Post. In the last year post has uncovered several instances of such Fons (both real and imposter) attempting to travel with members of their entourage-"Nchindas", "Kwifons," and perhaps one of several wives. DHS entry and exit records showing the travel history of these individuals and their past entourages have been crucial to Post uncovering these arrangements at the time of the visa interview.

¶6. Post completed a validation study of Cameroonian B1/B2 visas issued from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008 and found that 16% either remained in the United States or could not be located in Cameroon after multiple attempts by FPU to contact them.

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IV FRAUD  
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¶7. Due to the unreliability of genuine public documents and the ease of acquiring falsified ones, Post closely scrutinizes every family-based IV category, even when documentarily qualified. If the interview gives the officer reason to believe the stated relationship may not exist, significant additional proof of relationship is required and DNA tests are often recommended. Sending investigators out to remote civil centers to verify records on the spot is also helpful, but has also shown entire civic centers to be corrupt, casting additional doubt on the application while impeding the ability of Post to separate the truly fraudulent applicants from the genuine ones who happened to get their documents at a bad center.

¶8. K visa fraud continues to be a problem. Field investigations of relationships remain the primary, and often only, tool to find fraud in any case where the interviewing officer believes the relationship may be for immigration purposes only. As travel to remote areas is difficult and resources are limited, it can take as much as a year for such a field investigation to take place. Fraud prevention investigators have uncovered several instances where K visa beneficiaries were already married with families, where close friends and family were not aware of the supposed engagement, and where the petitioner and beneficiary were actually related.

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¶9. IDENT, CCD reports, and facial recognition are excellent tools for confirming both fraud and genuine relationships. Past visa applications are often revealed showing different identities, undeclared family members, or references to family and fiancs made in previous NIV interviews.

¶10. Post processes very few employment-based cases and therefore sees little fraud in this area.

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DV FRAUD  
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¶11. Post's policy of performing fraud prevention "prescreening" for every DV case has succeeded both in detecting instances of fraud in the DV program and discouraging future fraud. This review taxes the section's resources and impedes our ability to process DV cases. Prior to going to an officer for interview, each applicant's documentation (including, if necessary, proof of relationship) is reviewed by the fraud prevention unit, which makes any relevant observations and, if possible, verifies the authenticity of qualifying educational documents. Thanks to this, fraudulent cases are identified earlier in the process and the applicant can be directly confronted with the information. The FPU's involvement also allows interviewing officers to have the benefit of the investigator's experience during the initial interview. Post has noticed a reduction in the attempted use of fraudulent education documents in DV applications and attributes this to the real and perceived vigilance of the fraud prevention unit in verifying these documents.

¶12. Relationship fraud is a recurring problem every DV season. "Clip on" spouses, added after the applicant is notified that they were selected in the lottery, are a common occurrence in Yaounde as they are in most high fraud DV processing posts. As with other forms of relationship fraud, split interviews and, when necessary, field investigations of the relationship can often expose fraudulent cases. This DV season, Post adopted a strict appointment policy where applicants were permitted to reschedule their original appointment only once and within 30 days of the original date. While this was intended to better manage case workloads, Post has anecdotally observed fewer instances of "clip on" spouses while the

policy was in effect. Locally engaged staff has hypothesized that this is due to the amount of time typically required to arrange a sham marriage and the relevant documentation and coaching.

¶13. In the past few months Post has uncovered several DV fraud rings, located primarily in the cities of Buea and Bamenda. These organizations, based out of local cyber cafs, would assist prospective DV applicants (usually youth) and use a single post office box for all applicants. After receiving the winner's packet, the organization would then request large sums of money for the packet or demand that they consent to be paired in a fraudulent marriage with a third party. The organization would coach the married couple on embassy interviewing methods--lists of questions used in past split interviews have been found in applicants' files--and corrupted local officials would celebrate the marriage. Post has identified certain mailing addresses and marrying officials associated with these fraud rings and scans cases during the pre-screening process to note their involvement. Local law enforcement has been receptive, but to date ineffective.

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ACS AND U.S. PASSPORT FRAUD  
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¶14. The relatively low ACS load at Post, paired with high levels of vigilance by all ACS staff, has led to relatively few instances of passport and CRBA fraud at Post. "Bridge" photos showing a child growing from the time of last passport issuance to present day are asked for in all child passport renewals to prevent substitution, and secondary evidence of parentage is always requested given the unreliability of local birth certificates.

¶15. ACS and RSO offices have seen an increase in the already significant number of "419"-style email scams directed at American citizens through people either coming from, or claiming to come from, Cameroon. These have included sophisticated scams relating to adoptions, and a medical professional who has defrauded American health insurance providers of tens of thousands of dollars through fraudulent claims of treating American citizens for a variety of serious - but nonexistent - ailments. Local law enforcement, while not fully equipped to investigate reports from American citizens, has provided full cooperation to Post.

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ADOPTION FRAUD  
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¶16. Fraud in adoption decrees, across all types of consular work, is a continuing problem for Post. Informal adoption is common in Cameroon, but formal adoption is rare. Though there are partial and revocable types of adoptions here, it is far more common for two sets of parents to simply come to an arrangement regarding parenting responsibilities. As a result, even legitimate members of household may not have legal adoption papers and otherwise qualified principal applicants or asylum seekers are incentivized to create fake or back-dated adoption decrees in support of a family member. The majority of adoption decrees evaluated by Post are determined to be fraudulent--including virtually all adoption decrees forwarded to our office by the Department of Homeland Security for investigation. In reaction, Post has adopted a policy of FPU evaluation for any adoption decree that is material to any consular case (Visas 92, ACS, NIV, or IV).

¶17. Adoption immigrant visa cases are few, but fraud is relatively high. Not only is there a high level of fraud in adoption decrees and in identity documents, it is also common for the biological parents to be alive and well (and sometimes to have retained some level of legal parental authority). American citizens often become victims of scams where Cameroonian attorneys (who may or may not actually be the person they claim) accept money from Americans for children who either do not exist or for real children where the biological family has, in fact, retained the ability to revoke the adoption without the parent's knowledge. FPU has maintained good relationships with many of the courts who handle such decrees, and

many (though not all) can be sufficiently trusted to provide verification of an adoption decree over the phone. In cases where a court lacks such credibility, a physical, surprise visit to the court is required to check on the spot if the decree exists in their archives.

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USE OF DNA TESTING  
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¶18. Post continues to have only one panel physician after two others were de-certified after malfeasance in the DNA/blood sampling process. We continue to be confident in the integrity of the current process but maintain close observation.

¶19. Post views DNA testing as a vital tool for deterring fraud and for allowing legitimate applicants to quickly establish their eligibility, as many legitimate relationships in Cameroon lack traditional proof such as convincing photos or intimate knowledge of each others' lives.

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ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFIT FRAUD  
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¶20. Post continues to be concerned by the number of questionable asylum claims made in the US, many of which begin with a fraudulently obtained B1/B2 visa for an unrelated and unintended purpose, and which lead to large families applying for follow-to-join status. As noted in other reporting, while the government has occasionally restricted media freedoms, and prison conditions are deplorable, Post has not seen credible recent evidence of disappearances, torture or repression which fill the accounts of most asylum applicants. Indeed, asylum claims are openly discussed and are widely misperceived in the eye of Cameroonian public as being justified based on holding minority political views or due to petty harassment. Visa service vendors openly seek the business of Visas 92 applicants outside the Embassy, which is no more than a mile from the Presidential Palace, suggesting little credible fear of persecution.

¶21. Like IV processing, most fraud relating to Visas 92 follow-to-join cases relates to manufactured family relationships. Spouses and children often have poor recollection of the petitioning family member in the US and little or no proof of relationship to substantiate the claim. Even with families who appear legitimate, there are often young children (born as late as 8 months after the departure of the asylee petitioner parent) added on and adopted children whose decrees require verification before completion.

¶22. Post has observed a growing trend in age fraud, where a true but over-age child of an asylee petitioner who is not qualified for follow-to-join status falsifies a birth certificate and secondary evidence of age (such as baptismal records). They will often eagerly participate in a DNA test early on to give the appearance of a clearly approvable case and to avoid close scrutiny. IDENT and facial recognition have detected age impostors, and Post continues to attempt on-site verification of birth certificates and secondary proof of age (such as school or church records) in cases where age fraud is suspected.

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¶23. Post reports all lost I-551 cases to DHS.

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ALIEN SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING, ORGANIZED CRIME, TERRORIST TRAVEL  
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¶24. Most alien smuggling detected by Post is done through fake DV marriages and the NIV process-through fraudulent diplomatic notes, substitutions in performance groups, or the simple attempted sponsorship of a well-regarded authority for a string of applicants. Post's strict enforcement of the worldwide referral policy, along with the constant reinforcement to applicants that they alone must demonstrate their own eligibility for visas has been the best

solution so far to addressing this issue. While drug smuggling and other criminal activities certainly exist, we believe Europe to be the main destination, and are without significant information about such travelers. Immigration authorities are widely perceived to be easily corrupted, and airlines report that police routinely escort malafide travelers through customs. Post would welcome training or intelligence identifying regional patterns of illicit travel.

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DS CRIMINAL FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS  
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¶25. Consular and RSO sections at Post enjoy high levels of cooperation. RSO regularly investigates asylum claims (when requested to do so by the Department of Homeland Security), assists American victims of email scams, and when necessary assists in the apprehension of impostors and those providing fraudulent official documentation in the consular section. Through facial recognition, our section discovered that a contractor in a sensitive position in the Embassy had engaged in visa fraud. Post removed the employee based on our report.

¶26. The vast majority of cases involving both consular and RSO sections are collaborative in nature, and most visa investigations end with the applicant being arrested and investigated by local authorities. It is rare, however, for the arrested applicant to be held for long or for formal charges to be filed.

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HOST COUNTRY PASSPORT, IDENTITY DOCUMENTS, AND CIVIL REGISTRY  
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¶27. A lack of reliable primary documentation continues to be the biggest challenge for Post's fraud prevention efforts. Both fraudulent documents and genuine documents containing fraudulent information are commonly used throughout the country for a variety of purposes, and are easily obtained by applicants of all levels of wealth and stature. Birth certificates, death certificates, and marriage certificates are often created many years after the event and only reflect the attestation of those who say they were involved. These breeder documents are then used to create national IDs and passports containing whatever information the individual claims. Corrupt document issuing centers will not only create any new document desired, but maintain a selection of old, blank forms that have been pre-signed and stamped by the issuing authority at that time, available to anyone for a fee. This allows individuals to receive a genuine, aged document that will pass virtually any authentication effort. "Special Centers" - small issuing authorities located in remote areas and receiving little if any supervision - are particularly prone to corruption and any document issued from one should be considered highly suspect.

¶28. New Cameroonian passports feature a machine readable zone and photodigitized data page, but a lack of managerial control and easy access to fraudulent source documents make the information within untrustworthy. A Cameroonian journalist bribed an immigration official with USD 400 to get a passport in a fraudulent identity in just 24 hours.

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COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES  
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¶29. Corruption at all levels of governance creates a challenge for Post fraud prevention and local cooperation is uneven. Attempts to verify documents via phone or fax are not reliable, as answering civil employees are often complicit. Only visual, unannounced, on-the-spot inspections of civil records have proven effective, and even then can often be inconclusive if the physical records are poorly kept or expertly falsified. Fraud investigators have encountered increasing number of civil centers refusing access to their records, in contravention to Cameroonian civil status codes. The Cameroonian Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization has pledged to assist Post with obtaining the

cooperation of these centers.

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AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN  
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¶30. None

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STAFFING AND TRAINING  
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¶31. The Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) consists of one American Fraud Prevention Manager and two LES Fraud Investigators. The Fraud Prevention Manager is also Deputy Section Chief and head of the Immigrant Visa Unit. All three have taken the relevant FSI fraud prevention courses and online training as available. Post continues to request an ARSO-I in order to increase investigatory capability in the fraud prevention unit and allow for more timely resolution of cases.

PETERSON